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CONGRESSIONAL RETIREES DINNER

OCTOBER 3, 1974

*Mr. Speaker
my former colleagues
in the Congress*

AS I LOOK ABOUT ME TONIGHT AT SO MANY GOOD FRIENDS

WHO WILL BE LEAVING THE CONGRESS IN JANUARY -- I DON'T KNOW

WHETHER TO SING AULD LANG SYNE OR OUR PENSION PLAN IS BREAKING

↑

UP THAT OLD GANG OF MINE.

ANYONE WHO HAS SPENT A LIFETIME IN POLITICS CAN APPRECIATE THE APPEAL OF RETIREMENT -- WHEN THE ONLY ROLL CALL IS FOR BREAKFAST AND THE ONLY MOTION BEFORE THE HOUSE IS IN A HAMMOCK. IN FACT, I WAS TALKING TO GEORGE AIKEN AND LES ARENDS DURING DINNER AND I ASKED GEORGE HOW HE PLANNED TO SPEND HIS RETIREMENT. GEORGE SAID, "I'M GOING TO DO NOTHING IN THE MORNING, NOTHING AT NOON, NOTHING IN THE AFTERNOON, AND NOTHING AT NIGHT." THEN I ASKED LES ARENDS WHAT HE WAS GOING TO DO. HE SAID, "I'M GOING TO HELP HIM."

THINKING ABOUT WHAT TO SAY TONIGHT, IT OCCURRED TO
ME THAT I, TOO, AM A CONGRESSIONAL RETIREE. LEAVING THE
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES WAS ONE OF THE MOST DIFFICULT
TRANSITIONS OF MY ENTIRE LIFE. I HAD MANY REGRETS ABOUT
LEAVING, BUT ONE IN PARTICULAR: I ALWAYS WANTED TO GIVE
CARL ALBERT THE THRILL OF SERVING AS MINORITY LEADER.

BUT I STILL MISS THE DAY TO DAY CONTACT WITH SUCH
STALWARTS AS SENATOR NORRIS COTTON AND REPRESENTATIVES
CHET HOLIFIELD, EDITH GREEN AND MARTHA GRIFFITHS. I MENTIONED
LES ARENDS A MOMENT AGO. DO YOU KNOW THAT LES WAS PASSING
BILLS IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES WHEN I WAS STILL PASSING
FOOTBALLS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN? | AND I MIGHT ADD --
WITH FEWER FUMBLES.

AND WHO CAN EVER FORGET THE LEGENDARY EFFORTS OF

H. R. GROSS -- SOMETIMES KNOWN AS THE H. R. BLOCK TO UNNECESSARY

SPENDING? I HOPE H. R. AND HAZEL ENJOY THEIR VACATION TRIP

TO PARIS + AT NO EXPENSE TO THE TAXPAYERS.

I WOULD LIKE TO EXTEND A WARM AND SPECIAL GREETING
TO ALL THE LONG-SUFFERING SPOUSES OF OUR CONGRESSIONAL
RETIREES. IF YOU THINK LIFE WITH A SENATOR OR CONGRESSMAN
HAS BEEN DIFFICULT, WAIT UNTIL YOU HAVE THEM FULL TIME AT HOME.
THEY SAY THAT'S THE BIGGEST PROBLEM OF RETIREMENT. YOU HAVE
HALF AS MUCH INCOME AND TWICE AS MUCH HUSBAND.

I'M NOT GOING TO TALK TOO LONG TONIGHT. I'M STILL
MORE USED TO THE ONE MINUTE RULE OF THE HOUSE THAN THE
UNLIMITED DEBATE OF THE SENATE. IN FACT, SOMETIMES I WONDER
IF THAT ISN'T THE REASON A CONGRESSMAN CAN GET HIS WORK DONE
IN TWO YEARS -- AND A SENATOR NEEDS SIX.

NEVERTHELESS, I LEFT THE CONGRESS WITH RICH
MEMORIES. NOT JUST THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES IN WHICH
I SERVED FOR NEARLY 25 YEARS -- BUT ALSO THE "OTHER BODY,"
THE SENATE, OVER WHICH I HAD THE HONOR AND PLEASURE TO PRESIDE --
EVEN THOUGH I NEVER GOT TO BREAK A TIE.

IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT A HOUSE IS NOT A HOME -- BUT ALL
OF YOU KNOW THAT THE CONGRESS BECOMES A HOME FOR US ALL.
FOR ME, THE HOUSE WAS A HOME. IT WAS THE SEAT OF SHARED
EXPERIENCES. IT WAS THE SITE OF VICTORY AND DEFEAT. I SAW
HISTORY'S GREATNESS AND ITS SADNESS THERE. ITS GREAT
TRADITIONS WERE VERY MUCH A PART OF MY LIFE. IT WAS, TRULY,
A SECOND HOME.

AND TONIGHT, WE COME TOGETHER TO HONOR THIS
EXPERIENCE WHICH I AM SURE ALL OF US WILL VALUE FOR THE REST
OF OUR LIVES.

THE FACT THAT WE ARE HERE TONIGHT IS ALSO A TRIBUTE
TO THE COUNTRY WE ARE ALL HONORED TO SERVE. EVERY ONE OF US
HAVE HAD HUNDREDS OF HONEST DIFFERENCES AND EVEN A FEW HEATED
ONES. YET WE USUALLY DISAGREED WITHOUT BEING DISAGREEABLE,
AT LEAST, I DON'T REMEMBER THAT ANY OF YOU WERE. *disagreeable*
to me + I trust I reciprocated.

ONE OF THE WONDERS OF THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS IS
THAT IT BRINGS FROM ALL OVER OUR COUNTRY MEN AND WOMEN OF
SUCH CONTRASTING BACKGROUND AND BEARING. IT BRINGS TOGETHER
A PLURALITY OF OPINIONS AND A RICH DIVERSITY OF CHARACTER AND
EXPERIENCE. FOR EXAMPLE:

--THERE ARE TWO FORMER GOVERNORS IN THIS GROUP.

--MANY OF YOU HAD LONG EXPERIENCES IN STATE LEGISLATURES.

--SOME WERE MEMBERS OF THE JUDICIAL BRANCHES OF
GOVERNMENT.

KNOWING ALL OF YOU AND WORKING WITH ALL OF YOU HAS

ENRICHED MY LIFE. I HAVE BENEFITED FROM DIFFERENT PEOPLE

AND DIFFERENT THOUGHTS. I HAVE LEARNED MUCH FROM DISTANT

GEOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVES AND CONTENDING POINTS OF VIEW.

MOST IMPORTANTLY, I WANT TO SAY TO ALL OF YOU

TONIGHT THAT THE NATION IS GRATEFUL FOR YOUR SERVICE. AMERICA

IS A FAR BETTER COUNTRY FOR THE DEDICATED WORK YOU HAVE DONE.

I THINK OF THE FORTY YEARS SERVICE OF LES ARENDS AND
MARVEL AT THE DISTANCE AMERICA HAS TRAVELED IN THAT TIME.

I THINK OF THE THREE WARS AND MANY CRISES, BUT I ALSO THINK OF
ALL THAT HAS BEEN DONE FOR PEACE AND PROSPERITY.

COMMON TO ALL YOUR CAREERS IS SINGULAR PROGRESS
FOR AMERICA. THAT SHOULD ALWAYS BE A GREAT SOURCE OF
SATISFACTION FOR YOU.

MAY I ADD ONE OTHER VERY IMPORTANT THING ON THIS EVENING. WE KNOW SO VERY WELL WHAT A TOLL PUBLIC SERVICE TAKES ON OUR PERSONAL LIVES. IT HAS CALLED FOR MUCH SACRIFICE ON THE PART OF PATIENT FAMILIES. THAT IS WHY I AM HAPPY TO SEE THAT SPOUSES WERE ABLE TO ATTEND TONIGHT. I THINK IT IS CLEAR THAT THEY ARE EVERY BIT AS MUCH, IF NOT MORE, DESERVING OF BEING HONORED TONIGHT AS THOSE LEAVING THE CONGRESS.

I KNOW, IN THIS RESPECT, THAT BETTY HAS BEEN A SOURCE OF STRENGTH AND SUPPORT TO ME ALL THESE YEARS. SHE HAS BEEN A PARTNER IN MY PUBLIC SERVICE, AND A PARTICIPANT IN EVERY MAJOR EVENT. SHE WANTED SO MUCH TO BE HERE THIS EVENING TO SEE OLD FRIENDS, BUT SHE ASKED THAT SHE BE REMEMBERED. SHE ASKED ESPECIALLY FOR ME TO THANK ALL OF YOU WHO HAVE BEEN SO KIND IN SENDING GET-WELL MESSAGES AND WHO HAVE REMEMBERED US IN PRAYERS. BELIEVE ME, YOUR WARM CONSIDERATION ^{will} ~~IS GOING TO~~ BE CHERISHED BY OUR ENTIRE FAMILY FOREVER.

I WILL MISS ALL OF YOU AS COLLEAGUES. BUT THE NATION
WILL MISS YOU AS SERVANTS. THOUGH YOU ARE ALL LEAVING THE
CONGRESS, I TRUST THAT NONE OF YOU ARE LEAVING PUBLIC SERVICE,
YOU MAY BE AWAY FROM THE HILL, BUT YOU ARE CERTAINLY NOT OVER
THE HILL.

THERE IS TOO MUCH EXPERIENCE, TOO MUCH WISDOM,
AND TOO MUCH INTELLIGENCE IN THIS ROOM TO GO UNUSED IN THE
DIFFICULT DAYS AHEAD. BY MY OWN ROUGH CALCULATIONS, I
FOUND THAT THE 27 DEMOCRATS AND 25 REPUBLICANS WHO LEAVE OFFICE
THIS YEAR REPRESENT ABOUT 850 YEARS OF FEDERAL SERVICE. THAT
KIND OF ON-THE-JOB TRAINING IS HARD TO REPLACE.

AND SO, IN CONCLUSION, I OFFER THIS TOAST:

MAY YOUR DAYS OF RETIREMENT BE MANY --

AND YOUR MOMENTS OF TROUBLE FEW.

SAVOR YOUR MEMORIES OLD --

BUT RELISH THE FUTURE THAT'S NEW.

TO ALL OF YOU, I EXTEND MY HOPES AND BETTY'S THAT
YOUR DAYS OUT OF CONGRESS WILL BE PRODUCTIVE AND HAPPY ONES.
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THANK YOU FOR COMING TONIGHT.

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